

WILD RESOURCES AREAS ALTERNATIVES I - V

Introduction and Definitions

These alternatives present a range of options for Wild Resources Areas on the NHAL. The purpose of a Wild Resources Area, as defined in Administrative Code NR 44.06, is to provide areas for remote, non-motorized recreation where natural ecological processes predominate and evidence of human impact is low. These areas have little or no visible resource management activity and only primitive recreational facilities. Vegetative management would be restricted to occasional activities such as thinning of a pine plantation to create more natural-appearing forest conditions, or possibly control of exotic species. Generally, salvage of fallen trees after a disturbance would not occur. ([See Wild Resources Maps I-V](#))

Wild Resources Areas may have Recreation Settings of either Type 1 or Type 2 (NR 44.07). Type 1 areas are remote, and offer recreational users the experience of solitude, challenge, independence, and self-reliance. These areas include at least 2000 acres that are ½ mile from any federal, state, or county highway, and ¼ mi from any other public road, motorized trail, or frequently used railroad track. The Type 2 setting, which allows for more developed recreation than the Type 1 setting, provides a remote or *somewhat remote* area for solitude and primitive, non-motorized recreation. Type 2 areas may have some roads or motorized trails, but only at a low density. Type 2 areas may be smaller than Type 1 areas. They can also provide a buffer around a Type 1 area, enhancing the wild resource value of that core area.

The previous NHAL Master Plan from 1982 identified one 5,460 acre “wilderness area”, and three “wild areas” totaling 26,920 acres. The 1982 “wilderness area” has essentially the same management as a Type 1 Wild Resources Area. The 1982 “wild area” designation, however, is different from Wild Resources Areas. The previous “wild areas” allowed for some timber harvesting, habitat management including wildlife openings, and snowmobile trails, which would be typically prohibited in all Wild Resources Areas (Type 1 or Type 2) designated in the next master plan.

Process

In developing the Wild Resources Alternatives Maps I-V, WDNR staff first isolated blocks of land greater than 2000 acres that were the appropriate distance from public highways and town road routes. Some of these were eliminated due to significant conflicting uses such as power lines, nearby gravel pits, existing recreational facilities, etc. This process shows there are 17 areas on the NHAL that meet the minimum requirements to be considered for Wild Resources Area designation. A range of alternatives was then developed, from 1 proposed wild resource area in Alternative I to 17 areas in Alternative V. Acreage figures are shown in Table 2. In addition, Alternatives I, II, and III have a majority of Type 2 areas while Alternatives IV and V have a majority of Type 1 areas. (See Maps I-V.) Factors that influenced the alternatives include recreational and vegetative compatibility with the Wild Resources Area designation. Existing Wild and Wilderness Areas were carefully considered for potential designation as Wild Resources Areas.

Table 2. Wild Resources Area Alternatives I-V by acres and percent of state-owned land in the NHAL

	Total Wild Resources Areas (acres)	Type 1 Wild Resources Areas (acres)	Type 2 Wild Resources Areas (acres)	Percent of NHAL state owned land in Wild Resources Areas (Type 1 and 2)
Alternative I	6,182	4,019	2,163	3%
Alternative II	28,115	9,911	18,204	12%
Alternative III	36,424	16,148	20,276	16%
Alternative IV	62,688	37,683	25,005	28%
Alternative V	80,354	47,780	32,574	36%

Recreation

Wild Resources Areas provide opportunities for wilderness recreation, including hiking, canoeing, and hunting in more remote areas with little to no evidence of human impact. These areas offer opportunities for solitude, personal challenge, and independence, as well as aesthetic values.

Some areas included in Alternatives I-V may qualify as Wild Resources Areas without modification, while others do not currently meet the criteria in all respects and may require removal of facilities and roads, rerouting or closing of snowmobile trails, or thinning of pine plantations to produce a more wild appearance. Four-wheel drive access for hunting would be very limited in these areas, although remote walk-in hunting opportunities would be abundant. Trails in Type 1 areas would be open to hikers but closed to bicycles and horses. Campsites in Type 1 areas would be limited to fire rings and pit toilets only. Campsites in Type 2 areas would be limited to fire rings, pit toilets/box latrines, and a picnic table, except for disabled-access sites.

Vegetation

Areas designated as Wild Resources Areas, regardless of their Recreation Setting (i.e. Type 1, Type 2), would essentially have no active management for native community restoration or forest production. The majority of the NHAL was historically a pine dominated ecosystem maintained by natural disturbances like fire and wind. Today, fire is largely controlled and opportunities for prescribed burns are limited. As a result, the vegetation in Wild Resources Areas may, in the long term, undergo a shift from pine and red oak to hardwoods such as maple or yellow birch, due to the potential lack of disturbance from fire or harvesting.

Choices

Wild Resources Area alternatives will have different levels of compatibility with the Land Management alternatives and the Recreation alternatives. (See the “Compatibility” section, page 97.) Incompatible actions, such as harvesting timber, planting and encouraging young pine trees, or placing a motorized trail in a Wild Resources Area, present a choice. These areas could fulfill either one or the other set of objectives, but not both. In the feedback section, we will be asking you to give us input on how your values and goals are represented in this range of Wild Resources Areas. Please keep in mind that most likely, the Department will not be selecting one of the five alternatives, but rather developing a preferred alternative that contains elements from several of the five alternatives. In your feedback, feel free to pick and choose elements of the alternatives to create a hybrid alternative you think best suits the character and purposes of the NHAL.

Wild and Wilderness Lakes

The 900 lakes within the boundaries of the NHAL provide some of the property’s most highly valued recreational opportunities. The 1982 Master Plan designated 15 of these lakes “wilderness” lakes, and 35 “wild” lakes. The qualifications have changed somewhat since 1982. The primary change is that motors will be prohibited on wild lakes. A wilderness lake must have an undeveloped shoreline and be at least ¼ mile from any road. A wild lake must also have an undeveloped shoreline but may have limited road access.

Due to the new standards of “wilderness” and “wild” lakes, several lakes are currently designated but do not meet the criteria for their designation. For example, Allequash Lake is designated a wild lake but has a boat ramp and motor boat use. In the upcoming master plan, uses will need to be consistent with designations. In these cases, a choice must be made between keeping the wild/wilderness designation and retaining motorized use of the lake.

The master plan revision offers an opportunity for additional wild and wilderness lake designations, as well as the opportunity to remove existing designations. It also offers the opportunity to change a wilderness lake to a wild lake, or vice versa. Approximately 30 undesignated lakes have 100% state-owned shoreline. About two-thirds of them currently have either no defined access trail or walk-in access only. There is a potential to designate some of these lakes as wild or wilderness lakes in the next master plan.